1: Hocart Y-5 (ca. 1920) 1929 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Lakemba

The first child, boy or girl, of the High Chief is treated with state. Women come from Tumbou, Levuka, the country, to hold it by turns in their arms, not allowing it to touch the ground for ten days. They may not sleep in the house where the child is, they may not wash. The chief pays them with feasts and gifts. Leading noblemen come in. Every day a feast is made. On the tenth day the child's grandmothers, who have stayed in the house, go to bathe in the sea, which they do by going to fish. The child is bathed in a bowl or a bucket of fresh water, but they call it bathing in the sea.[20] A feast is made for its bathing.

SICKNESS AND MEDICINE

The Cure, the Diagnosis

Prevention of disease is almost unknown in Lau and it is difficult to make the natives take precautions against infection. It is known that some diseases spread (*ndewa*), but the persons infected are not avoided. Lepers are isolated by law, but are visited by their relatives and friends. In fact, one wise woman thinks that there is more leprosy now because lepers are isolated. Epidemics are called *mate taka*.

Sick persons are much downcast and lie helpless with a blanket over their faces, hardly answering when spoken to. Even taking into consideration that the commonest illnesses are fevers, which have depressing effect, Lauans do not stand up to illness. They also appear to judge a disease by its feeling. As soon as the depressing effect is over, the patient throws off his blanket, sits up, and goes about before he has recovered, hence attacks of fever last longer than necessary.

If a man is ill away from home, his people immediately take him home. The kinsfolk visit the patient. They sit and talk together, and at night have kava, often until late. If the patient be better, he sits up to receive the visitors.

The great number of names of diseases at first sight suggests a precise and highly developed diagnosis. For instance, some of the diseases of the abdomen are called: *ramberambe tu i kete, wanggangga i kete, ngata lua, oso, mbera a mbete, mbati yate, mbondra;* some kinds of "octopus." But an informant explains:

> They are all in the belly, but the names differ; it all depends on what is good for them (*kena yanga*); if a man is ill in the belly, they send for all those who know the names of diseases; they try one, then another; they come and touch (*vamotha*) the patient. If they touch the patient and he gets relief, they bring some medicine. It is our hand that is effective."

[20] Wailevu means great water. In Lau it is the sea, but in Viti Levu it refers to a river. The migration of the custom may explain the anomaly.

2: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara

but was done because the chief likes Tongan songs. Between rounds of kava, ceremonial presentations were made to the chief. These were two large pieces of Tongan tapa (called *i vaka mamatha*), two canoes, four turtles, and two large mats. Six kava bowls, to be sent by the chief from the Kambara people to the council of chiefs, were prepared for shipping. Meanwhile a *meke* was danced for the chief's wife by two groups of girls, representing the west and east sides of the island. At the end of the *meke*, the dancers removed their tapa attire and presented it to the chief's wife. This was called the *luvaluva ni meke*. The chief's wife made a return gift of money. Later another whale's tooth was presented by the assistant *mbuli* of Kambara and then a small feast (*i sirovi*) was presented. It consisted of a large fish, fish soup, and sweet potatoes.

Life Crises Ceremonies [4]

Pregnancy

Childbearing is an important social function for both parents. Through childbearing a woman can most successfully increase her social prestige, and women say that the happiest day of their lives is the birthday of their first child. It makes no difference to them whether the child is a boy or a girl. The first-born is the living representative of the ancestor gods and the temporary repository of the clan mana. The attention of the clan is concentrated on him. His conception and birth are marked by elaborate ceremonies, only partially repeated for subsequent offspring.

Conception is known in Lau to be the result of sexual intercourse, but the general opinion is that conception does not occur unless a couple copulates repeatedly. It is believed that a woman who has intercourse with many men will not become pregnant.

On Mothe, the beginning of a woman's first pregnancy is marked by a ceremony called *i vaka votu ni ngone* or *vaka votu*. The female members of the pregnant woman's clan gather together and her mother paints her entire body with a yellow powder (*rerenga*) made of the mangrove root, which is grated, mixed with water, strained, allowed to settle, drained and dried. This is called *poroporo*. The natives do not know why this is done but say it is an old custom. Four days later the women go fishing in the sea and the yellow powder is washed off. Then a feast for both men and women relatives is held.

During the first one hundred days of pregnancy a woman is a source of danger to the community, a state called *taiwaiwai*, and must observe certain tabus. For instance, she must not go fishing lest the fish break the nets; she must not touch or even look at a turtle net lest no catch be made; she may not touch the food of a sick person lest he grow worse; nor may she bathe in the sea. A small communal fishing catch is usually attributed to the presence

[4] For the development of the child and his induction into group life, see 23, pp. 26-59.

2: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara

854 [184] or three months. It is discarded in the sea without a tabu. This custom of *kato nda* which is common on Fulanga is not found on all the islands.

852 A feast called *mangitchi ni ona singa*, which is held when the first-born is one year old, is not held for subsequent children. If the child's parents are [851 431] prominent this is a large feast, marked by an affinal exchange of property. The child is bathed in the sea for the first time on this day. The ceremony is divided into two parts, the "bathing" and the "drying" rites. The bathing rites (*mangitchi ni sili ki wai levu*) are held on the beach by the women of the mother's clan. The mother's older sister, who is in charge, collects property (*i suai ni sili*) from the mother's clan, bathes the child or chooses another woman to do so, and distributes the portion of the *singa* feast which is eaten by the women on the beach. The father's older sister, who has charge of the drying rites, collects property (*vaka mamatha*) from the father's clan. Parents of the child receive no share of this property which is ceremonially exchanged and divided between the relatives.

On Namuka the first part of the ceremony (*i silisili ki wai levu*) is held when the child is about four months old and the second part (*mangitchi ni ona singa*) is held on his first birthday.[1]

Another important ceremony for the first-born is the *mangitchi ni kana mbaletchi*. It may be held at any time within the first year. On Fulanga this feast is held on the third day after birth. Formerly when the child was of a prominent family, this feast was attended by the whole village. Today it is a clan feast only. The clan members gather in the house of the oldest living male relative in the child's clan. The child is presented to the clan elder by his paternal grandmother, if she is living, or by his father's or his mother's sister. The elder sits on the mat with the child on his lap and food or kava is placed before him. He reaches over the child for food or for a drink and brings it to his mouth. Before the elder eats over the child, no one may do so, not even the child's mother, but afterward anyone may. A small feast is held by the relatives and property is presented to the elder by the child's parents.

In high ranking families a small household feast, called feast of the first tooth (*mangitchi ni vaka votu ni mbatchi*), is held for the first child's first tooth. When the child begins to crawl another small feast, called feast of the little old man (*mangitchi ni nggasinggasi*), is held. The last two feasts are rarely observed in southern Lau.

[851] A small household feast called *mangitchi ni papi* or *mangitchi ni mbaptiso* is held for every child at baptism into the mission church.

BOYS' PUBERTY

881 During my residence in Lau no boys' initiation ceremonies were held. The following information was obtained from natives on Kambara, Namuka, Mothe, and Fulanga.

3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara

If the child is born dead the body is kept near the mother
for three or four nights. It would be harmful to the mother to 845
take it way sooner. She would grieve and become ill with a
sickness characterized by fainting, body pains, and sleeplessness. Still births are buried in the village cemetery above a [766]
previous burial from the same clan. If both mother and child
die they are wrapped in one funeral bundle and buried in
one grave. Formerly the natives believed that their souls went
to Nai Thimbathimba, the jumping off place for the souls of [775]
the departed.

As a rule the father does not see the child before it is "on the 846
mat". He usually bathes and puts on a clean *lavalava* before
entering the house. The child is presented to him by his
mother or by his wife's mother. He breathes upon him
through his nose, the only native method of kissing, holds him
for a moment, and returns him without a word.

For several months after the child is born the father sleeps 846
in the men's house of his clan or in his father's house. 834
Formerly he slept in another house until the child was weaned,
and some men observe this custom today. Intercourse with
his wife is tabu until the child is weaned, lest the child get a [753]
sickness called *ndambe* (pronounced en-dam'-bē), or the
mother become pregnant. A man who breaks the tabu is
called "expert at causing *ndambe*". A child with this illness
cannot walk, but crawls on all fours with feet flat on the
ground. If a woman becomes pregnant while she is nursing,
people blame her husband because her milk will become "bad"
and harm the suckling child. The tabu against intercourse is
occasionally broken today, but apparently not often, for
practically all children in any one family are at least 18
months apart. The husband is supposed to be continent [837]
during this period, but he usually has clandestine affairs with
women who do not stand in the tabu relationship to him.

The child is named on the day of birth by the father's 553
mother after a member, usually an ancestor, of the clan. If 851
the parents are very fond of a child they give him several

3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara

851 553 names, but all children have at least two names; a Lauan name and a Lauanized biblical name. They receive the latter at a Christian baptism ceremony held in the mission church.

851 602 431 On the day of birth and for two or three days afterwards the mother and child are visited by relatives from both the mother's and the father's clan. The relatives bring small gifts consisting of roasted ripe coconuts, mats, barkcloth, and oil. The gifts are presented without ceremony, and are received by the paternal grandmother. They belong to the child's parents. This is one of a series of competitive affinal exchanges which begin with betrothal and continue throughout the marriage relationship in Lau. They serve to emphasize the relationship of the individual in a patrilineal descent group not only with his father's but also with his mother's clan.

846 For at least four nights after the birth, a group of five to ten female relatives from both the father's and mother's clans sleep in the house with the mother and child. Formerly the women stayed for ten nights, but the government has tried to discourage this custom on account of the drain on the economic resources of the child's father, so now they stay longer than four nights only if the child's father can feed them without straining his resources.

852 The most important birth feast is held on the first or second day after the birth. The birth feast of a first child, whether boy or girl, is larger and more elaborate than that for a subsequent child. The kin of both father and mother provide and prepare food for it, whereas only the father's kin do so for subsequent children. If the family is prominent, the birth feast is large and attended by the whole village; if not, the [554] feast is attended by near relatives only. The birth feast of a [848] child born out of wedlock is small. It is provided by the mother's kin only.

On the fourth day another ceremony is held. The mother bathes in the sea for the first time since the birth. She is